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40 EPA not telling Libby residents everything about tremolite

To the Editor:

Regarding the Roger Morris' editorial of February 11, 2005.

Something fascinating has occurred over the past several years. The EPA teams from Libby have hit the road show circuit with their story about Libby. San Francisco, Oakland (twice), Folsom (three times) California are the meetings I have attended. At each of these meetings the lead EPA personnel have told the audiences that tremolite asbestos does not remain airborne. In fact Paul Peronard's first realization of this fact in the year 2000 resulted in him writing an e-mail that said "this stuff falls like a rock."

In fact the world wide literature on tremolite describes epidemic situations similar to Libby in which the most important exposure pathways leading to disease do not come from ambient air at all. They come from intimate episodic (infrequent) exposures. The world-wide literature remarks at the apparent lack of airborne asbestos at each of these tremolite epidemic areas, some with far worse numbers of dead and

diseased than Libby itself.

The fascinating part about this is that the EPA has never once told an audience in Libby of this fact. I know because I made the original discovery and drew its conclusions through experimentation and have watched and read everything from Libby waiting for the EPA employees to tell the people of Libby this fact. It has never happened.

Yet everywhere else they go they express this information quite readily. It is available on video tape. Anyway, one might notice that this information conflicts quite heavily with the information written into the EPA's "Living with Vermiculite" brochure mailed to Libby residents where it indicates that short term low level exposures are harmless. Harmless! They are the whole ball game when it comes to excess disease in a strictly environmental situation. Anyone out measuring ambient air is pretty much doomed to find no or almost no tremolite. It is an experience now had by researchers around the globe. A

thousand times. Yet people are still being exposed and death and disease continues.

The key is the behavior of the fiber itself. So determining that Libby is safe based on ambient air readings is — well let's just say way confused and complicated. As I recall the newspapers published stories in the year 2000 before cleanup began in Libby about Libby being "safe." In fact W.R. Grace seems to have indicated Libby being safe for all these years.

One thing that a person can say from any distance from Libby is that if materials containing fiber are left behind anywhere in town, that means inside walls or land where the fibers are in the ground, then humans will be contacting these fibers and inhaling them. That means that some people will still

be contracting disease. Of course with cleanup getting rid of much of the material the people who contract disease will be fewer.

Still, if it was me or my family who ended up being one of these "fewer," I would be kinda pissed. Even more pissed that my neighbors and community doesn't want to know it and publicly insists that it can't happen.

Let the people from EPA who have written risk memos that explain that even .01% tremolite content in soils or dusts represent an "imminent and substantial public health danger," tell you that Libby is "Safe."

Some in EPA might tell you this, but none of the ones who know what they are doing will.

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